

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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P 242114Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7933

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

USCINCSO

CONFIDENTIAL SAN SALVADOR 1583

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PRFOR, PGOV, HO, ES

SUBJECT: SALVADORAN REACTION TO LOPEZ REMOVAL

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1509

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. THE APRIL 22 NEWS THAT GENERAL LOPEZ ARELLANO HAD BEEN REMOVED AS HONDURAN COS WAS RECEIVED IN EL SALVADOR, AS REFLECTED IN THE MEDIA AND FROM INITIAL COMMENTS BY EMBASSY CONTACTS, WITH A GENERAL SENSE THAT THE FULLY EXPECTED HAD TAKEN PLACE, AND THAT THE ACTION BY THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE ARMED FORCES INDICATED PROBABLE GUILT ON THE PART OF LOPEZ IN THE UB SCANDAL.

2. THE GOES REMAINS OFFICIALLY SILENT, ALTHOUGH THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ON APRIL 22 WHICH SAID THAT THE REMOVAL OF LOPEZ WOULD NOT RPT NOT AFFECT "AGREEMENTS THAT HAVE RESULTED FROM DIVERSE DISCUSSIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE AND BEEN ACCEPTED BY BOTH GENERAL STAFFS." THE AGREEMENTS WERE " TO COLLABORATE MUTUALLY

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RE RESOLVE IMMEDIATELY ANY PROBLEMS OCCURRING IN THEIR RESPECTIVE

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY." THE OFFICIAL MOD STATEMENT SAID THAT ITS CONTENTS WERE SUBSCRIBED TO BY BOTH MILITARIES. (TEXT CABLED SEPARATELY.)

3. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE EVENTS SURROUNDING LOPEZ' DISMISSAL HAS BEEN EXTREMELY HEAVY, WITH WIRE SERVICE STORIES BEING THE MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION. EDITORIALS HAVE ALSO BEGUN, WHICH IS UNUSUALLY SHORT LEAD TIME FROM EVENT TO EDITORIAL COMMENT. THE LA PRENSA OF APRIL 23 EDITORIAL WAS TYPICAL. IT SAID LOPEZ' DISMISSAL "WAS THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THE SCANDAL." IT EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH "IN PRINCIPAL WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AGAINST MILITARY COUPS THAT BRING DOWN TRULY CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENTS, POPULARLY ELECTED, THE LOPEZ ARRELLANO GOVERNEMENT WAS NOT OF THIS TYPE." THE EDITORIAL SAID THAT PERHAPS THE ASCENSION OF COLONEL MELGAR, WHO WAS PUT IN OFFICE BY A COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE, SIGNALS THE END OF PERSONALIST POLITICS IN HONDURAS.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER BORGONOVO, IN AN INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH THE AMBASSADOR EVENING OF APRIL 23, REFERRED TO HIS EARLIER PREDICTION (SEE REFTEL) THAT LOPEZ WAS FINISHED AND WOULD EVENTUALLY BE SACKED. BORGONOVO MADE NO SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT ON THE NEW COS MELGAR, BEYOND EXPRESSING HIS HOPE THAT THE NEW MAN WOULD HAVE THE SUPPORT NECESSARY TO BACK UP HIS DECISIONS ON THE HONDURAS-EL SALVADOR DISPUTE, SUPPORT WHICH IT IS NOW APPARENT LOPEZ DID NOT HAVE. THE FONMIN SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH IT OBVIOUS THAT THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES WILL RETAIN THE REAL POWER, HE IS WAITING TO SEE THE COMPOSITION OF THE NW CABINET (NOT ANNOUNCED AT TIME) TO HAVE A CLEARER IMPRESSION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S DIRECTION. HE ADDED THAT WE WILL ALSO HAVE A BETTER IDEA WHEN THE NEW GOH BEGINS TO IMPLEMENT WHAT TO NOW HAVE ONLY BEEN ITS DECLARATIONS OF INTENT.

5. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION ON APRIL 23 WITH LAB MIN CHAVEZ, AMBASSADOR AND DCM WERE ABLE TO SOLICIT HIS IMPRESSION OF NEW HONDURAN CABINET. ON LIMITED BASIS, OF HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ONE OF THE NEW CABINET, FOREIGN MINISTER GALVEZ, WHO WAS HONDURAN AMBASSADOR HERE AT TIME OF 1969 WAR, CHAVEZ SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED. THE LAB MIN CHARACTERIZED GALVEZ AS A PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT WITH PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE BILATERAL PROBLEMS, AND HIS APPOINTMENT WAS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT.

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6. COMMENT: IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT NO SALVADORAN TEARS ARE BEING SHED ON BEHALF OF LOPEZ ARELLANO. LOPEZ, IN OFFICE AT THE TIME OF 1969 WAR, WAS VIEWED BY MOST PEOPLE HERE IN THAT LIGHT AND THUS HARDLY A FRIEND OF EL SALVADOR.

7. FOLLOWING UP ON EARLIER SUGGESTION OF AMBASSADOR TO FONMIN BORGONOVO, DURING CONVERSATION WITH LAB MIN CHAVEZ, DCM SUGGESTED

THAT WITH THE TWO MILITARY GENERAL STAFFS COOPERATING WITH EACH OTHER SEEMINGLY IN ATMOSPHERE OF PROFESSIONAL FRIENDSHIP AND TRUST, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS TO GET SOME OF THE FIRST STEPS TO NORMALIZATION ACCOMPLISHED, FOR EXAMPLE THE REESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. CHAVEZ WAS RECEPTIVE TO SUGGESTION THAT SALVADORAN MILITARY EXPLORE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IDEA AT THIS WEEKEND'S BORDER MEETING OF THE TWO ARMED FORCES GROUPS.

8. THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA MIGHT HAVE RE ADVISABILITY OR POSSIBLE RESULTS OF A LOW-KEY APPROACH ALONG THESE LINES TO BOTH GOVERNMENTS AT THIS TIME.

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